

## Andrew Jackson to Susan Wheeler Decatur, April 2, 1829, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### TO MRS. SUSAN DECATUR.<sup>1</sup>

1 Copy. Handwriting of A. J. Donelson. Mrs. Susan Decatur was the widow of Commodore Decatur, whose tragic death in a duel with Commodore Barron, Mar. 22, 1820, made a deep impression on the imagination of the people and aroused much sympathy for his widow, who was left with slight means of support. She sought payment on account of her husband's destruction of the *Philadelphia* off Tripoli in 1804. Jackson recommended in his first annual message that compensation should be made to the Commodore, his officers, and crew, and unsuccessful efforts were continued until 1857. See also p. 128n., *post*.

Washington, April 2, 1829.

*Dear Madam* . Your note of yesterday is before me. In reply, permit me to assure you that your situation interests my warmest wishes, and will not be forgotten.

In reference to the claims of Mr Ridgely, I can only say that they must await the action of those general principles by which the administration is to be governed. Offices cannot be created by it, nor can incumbents be removed to make room for others without an enquiry establishing their incompetency, and even where this enquiry produces a vacancy it must be remembered that the numerous applicants for it have, each, a conviction of superior claim, and demand from the President an impartial hearing. It is a source of sincere regret with me that Congress disappointed your appeal to its justice and magnanimity. I am satisfied, however, that the disappointment was not the result of an unfriendly feeling, or of a conviction that your claim was not well founded; and that at the next session you may

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calculate upon a favorable decision. In the mean time I assure you that whatever I can do with propriety for your relief will be cheerfully done.

Yr. obt sevt